

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-6 and 13-22.

Please amend the claims as follows.

1-6 (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing metered capacity of at least one hardware resource on demand, the method comprising the steps of:

determining when a selected hardware resource is required;

when the selected hardware resource is required, determining whether unused billed capacity for a ~~similar~~ same type of hardware resource as the selected hardware resource is available; and

if unused billed capacity for a ~~similar~~ the same type of hardware resource is available, assigning the unused billed capacity of the ~~similar~~ same type of hardware resource to the selected hardware resource.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of billing a predetermined resource-time for the selected hardware resource if no unused paid capacity for a ~~similar~~ the same type of hardware resource is available.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of deducting the billed predetermined resource-time from a prepaid amount.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of determining whether the selected hardware resource has already been billed.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing metered capacity of at least one hardware resource on demand, the method comprising the steps of:

determining when the selected hardware resource is required;

determining whether the selected hardware resource has already been billed;

if the selected hardware resource has not already been billed, determining whether unused billed capacity for a ~~similar~~ same type of hardware resource as the selected hardware resource is available;

if unused billed capacity for a ~~similar~~ the same type of hardware resource is available, assigning the unused billed capacity of the ~~similar~~ same type of hardware resource to the selected hardware resource; and

if unused billed capacity for a ~~similar~~ the same type of hardware resource is not available, billing a predetermined resource-time for the selected hardware resource.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of deducting the billed predetermined resource-time from a prepaid amount.

13-22 (Cancelled)